

BOOK REVIEW

JOHN F. NUNN. 2002. **Ancient Egyptian Medicine.** (ISBN 0-8061-3504-2, pbk.) (Orders: University of Oklahoma Press, 4100 28th Avenue, Norman, OK 73069-8218; www.oupres.com, 405-307-9048 fax). \$29.95, 240 pp, 45 b/w illustrations, 32 tables, 1 map, 7" × 10".

When one considers the topic of Egyptology, the thoughts which arise are sure to concern themselves with the elaborate tombs and pyramids that can be found in any picture guide to the Ancient Egyptians; although this is an important facet of study, it allows other, more subtle aspects of the culture to be ignored. Within the 240 pages of his work, John Nunn presents a comprehensive, yet detailed, account of one of the lesser studied topics within Ancient Egyptian culture: medicine. Nunn carries the reader from a brief background of the aspects of Egyptian culture influencing their medical practice to studies of their healers, drug therapies and to their more specialized branches. Approaching the subject as a retired anesthesiologist as well as an Egyptologist, Nunn is in a unique position to act as an authority on the merging of these two subjects.

The book begins with a brief geographical and historical placement of the Ancient Egyptians, establishing the "unique environment in which their medical practice could be developed and recorded" by means of discussion of methods of food production, nutritional state, life expectancy, writing, etc. The primary concern of this first chapter is to set the stage and the background for the reader to be able to follow the remainder of the book. After establishing that the culture had the leisure to engage in activities other than defense and food production, the discussion moves to the primary source of the claims Nunn makes, the medical papyri.

Through an extensive compilation and investigation of various surviving medical texts written on papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*), Nunn reaches his conclusions about the medical practice of the Ancient Egyptians while also acknowledging the difficulties of translation. Other important sources of information used in the investigation include human remains and artistic renditions of the disease state. In particular, the embalming techniques and environmental conditions (a dry and hot climate) of the region acted to preserve the human remains in excellent detail (causing them to desiccate faster than they would putrefy). There is a conscious effort made to avoid the pitfalls of validating the past in terms of modern concepts, while yet highlighting the fact that certain medical procedures practiced by the Egyptians are in fact up to modern standards.

The remaining chapters carry the topics mentioned at the beginning to deeper levels; for example, carrying the topic of the patterns of disease, to intricate discussions about such things as parasitic, viral and bacterial diseases, deformities, and ageing processes. Furthermore the book is littered with documented studies regarding each topic, thus also serving as a reference to further reading on the particular topics. The readers will chuckle as they read the various treatments for disease states, such as those found within the chapter on specialized medical branches. Regarding sex determination during pregnancy: "Emmer (*bedet*) and barley (*it*), the lady should moisten with her urine every day, like dates and like sand in two bags. If they all grow, she will bear a child. If the barley grows, it means a male. If the emmer grows, it means a female. If they do not grow, she will not bear a child." The interesting aspect about this case is the unusual findings Nunn documents of studies done in 1963 by Ghaliounghui et al., testing the treatment.

The format of the book is quite easy to follow, it increases in complexity as the reader's background is established, and where a subject is touched upon that will later be clarified, the location is specified. Although there are no color illustrations, those few well-chosen diagrams clarify the concepts dealt with in the text. The many tables are quite comprehensive and include those dealing with herbal remedies of certain, less certain and uncertain origin, as well as 29 others. While it is unlikely

that the majority of readers will be able to follow the entire book with complete understanding, the discussions are all sufficiently in-depth to maintain a specialist's interest while also maintaining that of a reader new to the field.

While the information contained within this 2002 work is merely a reprint of the 1996 cloth publication, the improved presentation of the material makes it less liable to being overlooked. The book manages to bridge a gap in its particular field, building and improving upon other publications which have at best been incomplete and muddling. Nunn has presented a concise and well-rounded approach to the study of medicine in Ancient Egyptian culture, which will leave both the merely interested reader and the avid scholar, fully satisfied.—*Tiana Francesca Franklin, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX, 76102, 4060, U.S.A., tianaff@hotmail.com.*

NEW BOOKS

DAVID PIMENTEL (Editor). 2002. **Biological Invasions: Economic and Environmental Costs of Alien Plant, Animal, and Microbe Species.** (ISBN 0-8493-0836-4, hbk.). CRC Press LLC, 2000 N.W. Corporate Blvd., PO Box 31225, Boca Raton, FL 33431, U.S.A. (Orders: 800-272-7737, fax 800-374-3401; Canada & International 561-994-0555, fax 561-989-8732, www.crcpress.com). Price not given, 369 pp., graphs/figs., 7" × 10".

Forty-five contributors provide detailed information on components of the invasive-species problem from six continents. The book is divided into nine sections: **I** Introduction; **II** Australia; **III** Brazil; **IV** British Isles; **V** India; **VI** New Zealand; **VII** South Africa; **VIII** United States; **IX** World Overview. The book is informative and will serve "scientists, policymakers, and the public on the seriousness of non-native species invasions, which can cause extinctions and significant costs to the environment, economy, and public health."

ERIC T. JONES, REBECCA J. McLAIN, and JAMES WEIGAND (Editors). 2002. **Nontimber Forest Products in the United States.** (ISBN 0-7006-1165-7, pbk.). University Press of Kansas, 2501 West 15th Street, Lawrence, KS 66049, U.S.A. (Orders: 785-864-4154, fax 785-864-4586, www.kansaspress.ku.edu). \$29.95, 445 pp., 2 figures, 6" × 9".

From press release: "*Nontimber Forest Products in the United States* provides the first comprehensive examination of these abundant resources throughout the United States, illustrating nontimber forest products' diverse importance, describing the people who harvest them, and outlining the steps that are being taken to ensure access to them."

DUANE A. SMITH. 2002. **Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries, Revised Edition.** (ISBN 0-87081-684-5, pbk.). University Press Colorado, 5589 Araphoe Road, Suite 206C, Boulder, CO 80303, U.S.A. (Orders: 720-406-8849, fax 720-406-3443). \$14.95, 272 pp., 63 b/w photos, 2 maps, 6" × 9".